

Representative visits Cloudcroft, impressed by community's resolve

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By Duane Barbati

Congressman Harry Teague got a first hand look at the damage in Cloudcroft Saturday after winds between 67 mph and 90 mph swept through the small mountain town Tuesday.

The Otero County Electric Cooperative had about 5,500 meters throughout the mountain community on Tuesday. The cooperative has restored power to the entire village of Cloudcroft and most of the outlining communities. Damage is between \$2 million and \$3 million to its equipment, the company estimates.

Cloudcroft had three structures totally destroyed in the wind gust storm, 65 structures with major damage and 32 structures with minor damage.

Teague was escorted around Cloudcroft's damaged areas by Mayor Dave Venable, Fire Chief Erich Wuerschling and Otero Emergency Service Director Paul Quairol. Teague saw several homes damaged and fallen trees uprooted by the wind storm.

Venable told Teague the village had no injuries or deaths during the wind storm.

"Those people with health issues were taken care of immediately," Venable said. "It all worked out well considering the devastation we had up here."

Teague, D-Dist. 2 said he has never seen winds cause so much devastation in an area.

"I really didn't know what to expect before coming here," he said. "I have never seen the results of 90 mph winds."

Teague said he met a Cloudcroft man who had a positive attitude while touring areas with damage in the small mountain town.

"We talked to a man where a tree was holding another tree off his house," he said. "They all see the silver lining instead of the cloud. It's a pretty good statement of the American people with their attitude and resilience."

Teague said he was amazed the Otero County Emergency Services, Cloudcroft citizens, volunteer from across the state and people from neighboring state helped with the emergency.

"They all put this back together in 96 hours," he said. "The Governor declared this a disaster area. There is a lot of state relief for Cloudcroft. They've not asked for Federal relief yet. They're might be some things we can help them with."

Teague said he will have his staff members hold office hours in Cloudcroft next week.

"We want to check and see if services are available for them," he said. "The USDA has so many services available that people don't know about. We want to make people aware of the services available to them."

Teague said we see here what the state and people of Otero County are capable of achieving.

"What we can do best for them is replenish their resources they used up," he said. "We may be

able to offer some financial resources."

Teague had plans to visit Ruidoso and Roswell for the laying of the wreaths for fallen soldiers.

"Once the storm happened on Tuesday, we changed our schedule," he said. "We wanted to come and see if we could be of some assistance. We heard about it on Tuesday night and called Mayor Venable, Alamogordo's mayor and the base commanders at Holloman and White Sands Missile Range Wednesday."

Teague said he will not be surprised if Cloudcroft's damage is in the \$8 million range.

"We won't know the total cost for a few weeks," he said. "Cloudcroft is a small community that doesn't have the resources of the big communities or U.S. Army. I am glad I visited Cloudcroft. It's tremendous how the Cloudcroft and Otero County people pulled together to cleanup this mess. I am proud of them."

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